



Secretary's Column

Budget Proposal Ensures Safety of Public, Future of Law Enforcement

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While there are some signs that the historic recession of the past decade is finally loosening its grip on our economy, the budget address presented in mid-January by Gov. Steve Beshear indicated Kentucky would likely endure another two years of economic hardship.

Still, even within the confines of a budget he termed "inadequate," Beshear presented a plan that maintains a commitment to his top priorities, including public safety.

Most notably, the agencies under the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet were spared egregious cuts, with most areas taking a 2.2 percent reduction in fiscal year 2013, and maintaining that as a baseline in fiscal year 2014.

The proposal shielded law enforcement agencies from the worst of the budget pain by limiting their cuts to 2.2 percent as well, including state police, prosecutors and the juvenile justice system.

I take no pleasure in heading one of the "spared" agencies — departments throughout state government must figure out how to deliver their critical services with much deeper cuts. But, I'm mindful that the budget reflects the governor's continued emphasis on ensuring the safety and protection of the commonwealth and its citizens.

The budget proposal does that in numerous ways.

The governor recommended making all Peace Officer Professional Standards-certified officers throughout the state eligible for an annual training stipend.

Funded through a premium on insurance policies, the Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund provides a \$3,100 annual incentive stipend to encourage and compensate officers for receiving training in the constantly evolving field of law enforcement.

The recommendation will bring into the fund 185 officers and investigators with the Attorney General's office, Department of Agriculture, Alcoholic Beverage Control and the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission, among others. Another 124 officers in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources also

are proposed to be included in the stipend, although from a dedicated revenue stream separate from KLEFPF.

The budget, as proposed by Beshear, also recognizes that the success of House Bill 463, the Public Safety and Offender Accountability Act, depends largely on maintaining course with planned expenditures.

This landmark legislation, which was championed by a bipartisan, multi-disciplined team and received near-unanimous approval from the General Assembly, is designed to decrease the state's prison population, trim incarceration costs, reduce crime and improve public safety.

To that end, the governor's budget recommends investing \$6 million in drug treatment programs in fiscal year 2014, and includes hiring additional pre-trial and parole officers to increase supervision of inmates as they re-enter society. It also commits nearly \$9 million during the biennium to the Local Corrections Assistance Fund, for things like treatment programs, training, equipment and facility upgrades.

The budget sets aside \$2 million in bond funds to make improvements to the new state police training academy that was created last summer by the closing of a state prison. The funds will begin the process of modernizing the complex so that Kentucky State Police and eventually other law enforcement groups will be trained in the most state-of-the-art facility possible.

Clearly, the recession will continue to require painful cuts across all state government agencies and functions, and departments responsible for criminal justice services are not excluded. But I am confident that, despite this, the law enforcement professionals in this commonwealth will continue to carry out their crucial duties with dedication and determination. ■